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**Milwaukee Audubon Society Gift Supports
Community Efforts to Conserve Urban Birds**

*Bird City Wisconsin Project Will Recognize Communities That Help Protect
Declining Urban Bird Populations*

The Milwaukee Audubon Society announced today that it was donating \$5,000 to the recently launched Bird City Wisconsin project.

Milwaukee Audubon was the lead organization in a statewide partnership effort that last fall attracted one of 48 *TogetherGreen* national innovation grants. That grant enabled Milwaukee Audubon and its partners to establish Bird City and its web site, www.birdcitywisconsin.org, which seeks to bring together Wisconsin communities to protect declining bird populations through hands-on conservation activities. Successful urban bird protection will give those communities another honor: recognition as a Bird City Wisconsin.

The additional funding announced today is aimed at financing street signage, flags and recognition plaques that will be awarded to successful Tree City applicants.

Bird City Wisconsin is modeled on the successful nationwide program Tree City USA, a community improvement project sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation. The Bird City Wisconsin program will address an increasing problem in Wisconsin and elsewhere: the decline of urban bird populations. Chimney Swift populations in Wisconsin, for example, have declined by more than two percent annually for the last 28 years, while the Purple Martin – which nests in colonial boxes often near water – has declined by six percent over the same period.

The initial \$8,000 Together Green grant helped power the partnership among Milwaukee Audubon Society, the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, the Wisconsin Audubon Council and the Madison Audubon Society. Together they developed the criteria for Bird City recognition and launched the web site to communicate their effort. Bird City currently is seeking to identify at least five communities interested in working towards the certification, and prepare for a public launch of the program in 2010.

“Recognition as a Bird City will be a feather in the cap of any Wisconsin community,” said Andrew Struck, president of the Milwaukee Audubon Society, when the Together Green

grant was announced in October. "This program will recognize conservation efforts already under way and spur other cities, counties, towns and villages to adopt the best practices we will spotlight," added Struck, who also is director of the Ozaukee County Planning and Parks Department.

"That's why Milwaukee Audubon has decided now to make this additional investment in Bird City," Struck said. "Together Green has made it possible for us to get launched, and we hope it will support us next year as well, but this sizeable local gift allows Bird City to advance its timetable and move from planning to implementation."

Bird City Wisconsin will emphasize the protection and management of green space, landscaping with native plants in backyards and parks, adoption of architecture and lighting systems that reduce collisions, and many other tools helpful to the breeding, wintering, and migrating birds that seek safe places to spend time and find food.

The Bird City innovation grant was part of \$1.1 million awarded by the *TogetherGreen* initiative last year. National Audubon and Toyota launched the five-year *TogetherGreen* initiative in 2008 to fund conservation projects, train environmental leaders, and offer volunteer opportunities that significantly benefit the environment. Grantees were selected from scores of applicants across America. Funds were awarded to Audubon organizations that demonstrated exceptional innovation in working with other groups on projects that will produce tangible benefits for environmental quality.